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ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

An optical spike is generated at an arbitrarily selected location within an arbitrary optical link. The optical spike is generated by deriving a spike signal having a plurality of components, and launching the spike signal into the a transmitter end of the optical link. An initial phase relationship between the components is selected such that the involved signal components will be phase aligned at the selected location. In order to achieve this operation, the initial phase relationship between the components may be selected to offset dispersion induced phase changes between the transmitter end of the link and the selected location. One or more optical spikes can be generated at respective arbitrarily selected locations within the link, and may be used for performance monitoring, system control, or other purposes.